

LA PEROUSE,

A DRAMA, IN TWO ACTS.

FROM THE GERMAN OF

AUGUSTUS VON KOTZEBUE;

BY

BENJAMIN THOMSON,

TRANSLATOR OF THE STRANGER,

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE.

Oh Nature, how affecting are thy sorrows!

How moving, melting in a mother's eyes!

Rowe.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR VERNOR AND HOOD, POULTRY.

1799.

[Price ONE SHILLING.]

PERSONS.

LA PEROUSE.

ADELAIDE, *his Wife.*

CLAIRVILLE, *Adelaide's Brother.*

HENRY, *Adelaide's Son, between eight and nine years of age.*

MALVINA, *a young Savage.*

CHARLES, *Malvina's Son, between seven and eight years of age.*

The SCENE lies on an uninhabited island in the South-Sea. In the back-ground is the sea-shore, and on one side a high rock.



LA PEROUSE.

ACT I.

La Perouse is standing on the highest point of a rock,
and looking at the horizon.

Per. **T**HE mist disperses—yet still seems it in contention with the sun, and still its vapours cloud the surface of the sea. Thus does calumny overshadow virtue, and create imaginary forms, till it is at length absorbed by truth. Ha! what a spectacle! Already on the neighbouring island does the summit of a mountain peer through the gloom, while thin clouds seem to be creeping up and down its side. And now large silver spots are visible upon the sea, the prospect widens every instant, the scene appears more glorious, and this tear of melancholy starts forth as a prayer to the Creator. Do I not discern something white in the horizon? A cloud? No.—A man—a swan? No. Heavens! what can it be? A sail! a ship! Forfaken wretch, that I am! My dreams of hope still haunt me, while awake. And yet—it moves—unlike a cloud—unlike a fowl.—Away, ye vapours, sink, sink into the deep. Here do I stand forlorn and powerless, trembling, and

A 2

wishing

wishing every faculty was centred in my eye. Yes, yes! The mast appears. [*With the keenest expressions of delight.*] It is a ship. [*Sinks on his knees and clasps his hands.*] Oh, God! For the first time, after eight years—for the first time I again behold a ship. [*Springs up, draws a white handkerchief from his pocket, and waves it in the air.*] Alas! They cannot see me. They will pass without hearing my cry of anguish. Perhaps, even now my fate depends upon some single seaman's eye. Oh, God! direct one eye towards this spot. Let but one mariner discern me from the mast, that he may call to the pilot, "There is a fellow-creature in distress." In vain! I'll make a fire, thick volumes of smoke shall rise to the clouds. [*The report of a cannon is heard far at sea.*] Ha! What means that? Was it an answer to my signal? It was! It was! Joy! Triumph!—The vessel turns—'tis steering hither—Away! away!

[*Rushes with a dizzy rapture down the rock, when he is met by Malvina.*]

Mal. Whither so fast, dear friend?

Per. A ship! a ship!

Mal. Where?

Per. There! there!

[*Runs away.*]

Mal. A ship! what do I care for that? What can a ship bring me? I have every thing I want, and love my friend. Where is my boy, my cheerful Charles, as his father calls him, though I had rather call him Tomai, for that is his grandfather's name. Oh! were the old man to come over from his island, were he to see my boy climb to the top of the highest tree, and shoot an arrow from his little bow, surely he would no longer be angry. Were he to hear all that I have learnt of my friend, to find what a good God he has bestowed upon me; to see
how

how happy and contented we are in sunshine or a storm; but this ship, what can it want here? We want no ship. Yet my good friend seemed to be glad, therefore I must be glad, for we never yet were happy singly.

[Charles comes hopping towards his mother.

Cha. Mother, I've seen something.

Mal. Where have you been?

Cha. I've been on the beach, looking for muscles.

Mal. Well, and what have you seen?

Cha. It looked like a great mountain in the sea when it was far off, but now it is come nearer, it is not a mountain.

Mal. True. It is a ship.

Cha. A ship! Oh no! But there is a ship just come into the bay, like our's, only much larger.

Mal. That is called a boat. Were there people in it?

Cha. Yes, many; such people as my father. They stepped ashore and shouted—so I ran away. There was a woman among them, who tried to catch me, but I ran quicker than she could. She was not like you, mother, but such a woman as my father.

Mal. Did you not meet your father, then?

Cha. No. I crept through the bushes, and the strange woman followed me. I looked round once or twice—she nodded, and shewed me something that glittered, but I laughed, and ran away.

Mal. Which way did she go?

Cha. I don't know. She perhaps grew tired, when she found she could not overtake me! Now I'll creep again through the bushes, and look; but don't be afraid, they shall not catch me.

[Runs away.

Mal.

Mal. Why should I be afraid? If they be such men as my friend, they must be good men.

Enter Adelaide.

Ade. Ha! One of the wild inhabitants of this island! Oh, that we but understood each other.

Mal. Welcome, lady.

Ade. How! Do you understand my language?

Mal. I have a friend, who instructed me in it.

Ade. An European! A Frenchman! Tell me quickly, who is your friend? How came he hither?

Mal. Do you see that rock? Many years ago a ship was wrecked upon it, and no one escaped, except my friend.

Ade. His name?

Mal. Alexis.

Ade. Heavens! what kind of person is he?

Mal. The handsomest on earth.

Ade. The colour of his eyes?

Mal. Black and sparkling, like the eyes of a sea-lion, yet mild and friendly.

Ade. Is he tall?

Mal. When he clasps me in his arms, without stooping, I kiss his breast.

Ade. [Alarmed.] Clasps you in his arms!

Mal. To be sure. He is my friend, and I love him. Do you know him, as you ask so many questions?

Ade. Perhaps, I may. I cannot be certain; but I am in search of such a man as you describe.

Mal. You cannot find another.

Ade. Shall I wish or fear to have found him?

Mal. If you fear the man, do not seek him.

Ade. Alas, good creature! I had a dear husband, whom the love of fame tore from my arms. He was my all, my world; but he went in search of a

new

new world. My sighs swelled his sails, our prattling babes knelt on the shore.

Mal. How could you still love the wicked man?

Ade. Seven years I awaited his return in vain.

Mal. Poor woman!

Ade. Many, who had been driven by the love of gain through distant seas, returned with loads of wealth, but no one had seen him, no one brought any tidings of him. Not even a fragment of the wreck had been discerned, not even a corpse had been discovered on the beach.

Mal. Then you may hope your friend is still alive.

Ade. Love is ever ready to nourish hope. Two vessels were fitted out to go in search of him. I petitioned for a place, were it but in the lowest part of the ship. Dangers and difficulties were held out to me; but oh, the people knew not what sincere affection can endure. 'Tis true I am ill—my strength is exhausted—but should he be restored to me, where would memory find a place for my past sufferings? Should he not be restored to me, what matters it in which quarter of the globe anguish deprives his inconsolable Adelaide of life?

Mal. Bad woman! you make me cry.

Ade. Humanity granted my petition, and I was permitted to embark. My youngest boy clung to my neck, and I brought him with me. For thirteen months we have been wandering from one ocean to another, landing on inhabited and uninhabited coasts, searching and inquiring every where—but oh, no one knew any thing respecting him. You are the first person who has rekindled in my breast the expiring spark of hope.

Mal. How sorry am I to rob you of this weak consolation! He is my friend, and cannot be yours.

Ade. Where is he?

Mal. He ran down to the bay.

Ade. Is this island well inhabited?

Mal. Oh yes! Alexis, I and love——

Ade. Nobody else?

Mal. Nobody else, yet still is every corner of the island inhabited. [*Looking round.*] I wish this boy had not run away—he should have called his father. You seem tired, good woman.

Ade. Tired and ill.

Mal. Seat yourself upon this mossy bank—my friend prepared it for me. He will soon return, for he never leaves me long alone. Rest here till I run into the wood, and bring you some reviving fruits.

[*Runs away.*]

Ade. The happy moment is perhaps arrived, which love has wrested from the elements—and do I tremble?—She would have sent the boy to call his father! Who is this boy? who is his father?—Ha! Must I be doomed to find the father of my children, and not my husband? Have I braved every peril in pursuit of him, to find him in the arms of this young savage? In every shape have I defied death, but in this I never fancied it. Alexis! art thou he? Are these thy footsteps? Did thy hand twine the branches of this arbour?—And even were it not he—were it a stranger—one of his companions—the only one saved—said she not the only one?—Be it then La Perouse—the mother shall forget all that torments the wife. My Henry, my Laura, my Charles—for you I have braved the winds and waves—for you I left my native land. Your father and protector I will restore to you, and then seek in another world the reward of faithful affection which was not to be found in this. Rest here, did she

she say?—On this seat made by my husband for another?—No: here I cannot rest.

Enter La Perouse in most violent agitation, with outstretched arms, glowing countenance, and eyes wildly rolling around. His repeated cry is heard before he appears.

Where is she? where is she?

Ade. Ha! what voice is that?

[Runs towards him.]

Per. Adelaide!

Ade. My husband!

[Sinks into his arms. A pause. They exchange mutual tokens of silent rapture.]

Ade. Are you really still alive?

Per. Is it possible? So much affection!

Ade. Did you expect less of me?

Per. With your tender frame—

Ade. Love invigorates it.

Per. With your timidity—

Ade. Love inspires courage.

Per. How could you leave your aged mother?

Ade. Her blessing accompanied me.

Per. How could you leave our children?

Ade. My blessing remained with them.

Per. All for my sake?

Ade. All for your sake.

Per. What God can reward you for it?

Ade. I am rewarded. I again possess you.

Per. How much must you have endured!

Ade. 'Tis all forgotten.

Per. Every day, death before your eyes.

Ade. And every day the hope of finding you.

Per. None but such a wife could do this.

Ade. For such a husband.

Per.

Per. Are our children alive?

Ade. They are.

Per. But did I not leave you with new hopes?

Ade. Which heaven fulfilled by bestowing on me a lovely boy—my Henry—you shall see him.

Per. See him!

Ade. He is with me.

Per. Where?

Ade. On board.

Per. True. I remember the men in the boat mentioned him; but as soon as I heard your name, I flew to find you.

Ade. Impatience made me the first to land. My brother too is with me. A thick fog separated his vessel from ours two days since, but we are every moment in hopes of his arrival.

Per. Heavens! if this be a dream, oh that I never may awake!

Ade. 'Tis not a dream. I have found my husband again. Love binds one part of the world to another, and converts the ocean into a drop of water. There is no desert waste, no unpeopled shore, from which the gratitude of love may not at some time rise to heaven; whether aloud, or silent, in words or in tears, is to thee, kind Providence, alike.

Per. Oh how that sweet, that well-known voice reminds me of domestic bliss! I hear thee, cast a glance upon these barren rocks, and ask myself astonished, where we are.

Ade. Is it, then, so singular that a loving wife should brave the elements? The national convention decreed that two vessels should be fitted out to seek the navigator Prouse, and restore him to his native country. Affection decreed that I should go in search of the lost husband and lamented father. Could I allow these ships to sail without me? In what

what language could the mariners inquire among wild nations for you? Love taught *me* a language. Who could so well discover the slightest traces of you as your Adelaide? Who so well as she could recognise the remnant of a garment, or initials carved upon a tree? If you were wandering in woods and wildernesses, whose voice could so soon reach your ear as hers?

Per. Noble creature! Do I deserve this exalted heavenly affection?

Ade. Would you have done less for me?

Per. Will you never repent this sacrifice?—If subservient to my fate, I was obliged by duty and my helpless situation to appear unfaithful, will you—

Ade. [*Shuddering.*] Unfaithful!

Per. To appear unfaithful, I said. The heart alone can decide whether I was really so.

Ade. Before you proceed, tell me—were you, of all who failed from France, the only one who escaped death?

Per. I was.

Ade. Oh! then I know all.

Per. Impossible! I found you here alone.

Ade. The only one who escaped death you may be, but not the only one who dwells upon this island. A girl—

Per. Have you seen her?

Ade. I have. She called you her friend.

Per. She was my benefactress.

Ade. And what are you to her?

Per. Every thing.

Ade. More than you ought to be?

Per. Listen to me, and judge. Upon yonder rock, against whose sides the foaming billows broke, a tempest drove us. The vessel burst asunder. Death forced its way through every cleft, and corpses

soon floated all around, on fragments of the wreck. I still swam, and buffeted the furious waves, hoping to gain the coast so near me, but the storm derided my exertions. My strength was exhausted: I thought once more of thee, my children, and my Maker—and let my arms sink. When I came to myself, I lay stretched on the turf. A young female savage was kneeling at my side, who on my first shewing signs of life uttered a cry of joy—

Ade. Did *she* save you?

Per. Thrice had she sprung into the foaming flood, and thrice the boisterous billows hurled her back upon the rocky shore. In vain did death howl to her in the tempest. In vain did the watery abyss threaten to gorge her, or to dash her piecemeal on the craggy rock. With the courage of a hero, and the strength of a savage, she plunged for the fourth time into the main, seized me by the hair, and bore her booty from the contending elements.

Ade. Alas! at what price?

Per. Hear further. This little island is uninhabited. But now and then the wild neighbours come from yonder shores to fish. Malvina had accompanied her father and her brothers. They wished to murder me, and her tears were my only protection. She prepared a place of repose for me beneath some cocoa-trees, and twined the branches above my head. I was sleeping soundly, when at midnight she awoke me. Trembling she said, “follow me instantly,” and drew me away with her. She led me through the thickets till we reached the sea. There she crept with me into the crevice of a rock, embraced me with a smile, and seemed to feel childish delight in having again preserved my life. Her brothers had in the night resolved upon my death. They thought their sister was asleep, but Malvina listened,
and

and learnt their design. Favoured by the dark she came to me, and rescued me from the assassins.

Ade. She deserves my gratitude and admiration, but can I love her?

Per. Still more. Next morning search was made for her. The woods resounded with entreaties and with threats. We heard her old father on the rock above us. He cried mournfully, "Malvina! my daughter! will you forsake me?" Malvina wept, but would not leave me.

Ade. Enough! I forgive you.

Per. When, after a long and fruitless search, the canoe containing her father and her brothers left the shore, she peeped through the bushes, and her tears trickled from leaf to leaf, but no sound betrayed her sorrow. And when the distant boat appeared like a small spot upon the sea, weeping she clasped me in her arms and cried, "I have now no father, no brothers, you are my all, do not forsake me."

Ade. And she petitioned not in vain?

Per. Since that day I have owed my life to her a thousand times. But for her I had perished by hunger. She taught me how to catch fish and fowl in nets and springs. She taught me how to distinguish wholesome herbs and fruits, and warned me which were poisonous. She made for me this ingenious covering of skins and feathers. She decorated my dwelling with shells and pebbles. Speak! what could I do? Separated from the inhabited part of the world—in all human probability doomed to pass my days upon this island—not allowed even to hope that I should ever behold my native land again, what recompence could I offer to my benefactress?—To her, who had for my sake gone into voluntary banishment,

nishment, who had assuaged my sorrows, and when she could not assuage, had voluntarily helped to bear them?—She required my heart—and I gave her a grateful heart.

Ade. You are justified. My affection mourns, and cannot condemn you. But, Alexis, what must now become of us?

Per. Ask me not. The present is as yet so new, that I cannot cast a look into futurity.

Ade. Is it true, then, that she is a mother by you?

Per. It is true.

Ade. Oh Alexis! which mother will you forsake?

Per. Neither.

Ade. Heaven assist us!

Per. I see Malvina coming hither; compose yourself, Adelaide. Let us for a moment conceal the secret from her. The first emotions of these rude people are violent. Let me prepare the poor girl for the blow.

Ade. I will be silent.

Enter Malvina with some fruit.

Mal. Here is some fruit. Take it and eat. [*To Perouse.*] Ha! are you there? Welcome! this good woman has lost her friend, and she is come very far to seek him; but he is not here—I am sorry for that.

Per. She is my sister.

Mal. [*Smiling.*] Your sister! Oh! you are joking.

Ade. No, he is my brother.

Mal. Indeed! well, but you were not in search of your brother?

Ade. I was in search of the man dearest to me.

Mal.

Mal. That's right. I have brothers too, but I staid with the man dearest to me. But, as your friend is lost, remain with us. I am glad you are his sister, and I love you for it.

Ade. I thank you, good girl.

Mal. For what?

Ade. You saved my brother's life.

Mal. Oh! that is long ago. I should like to do it every day, for I love him dearly. You don't know how fond we are of each other. You must be glad of that, as you are his sister.

Ade. [*Forcing a smile.*] Certainly.

Mal. Sometimes, indeed, he has wrinkles in his forehead, as he has just now; then he is thinking of his native home. But when I play with him, and caress him, and stroke his cheeks, the forehead grows smooth again. [*She does this as she describes it.*] But no—it won't do to-day.

Per. [*Returns her caresses with forced good-humour.*] Have you provided for our dinner?

Mal. [*Holding him.*] I won't let you go. [*In a mild persuasive tone.*] Give me a kiss, that your sister may see how much you love me.

Ade. [*Suppressing her pain.*] Leave him in peace, dear girl, he has odd fancies.

Mal. Odd fancies! about what? He should rejoice at your arrival.

Ade. He does too; but I have been obliged to bring him unwelcome tidings. During our separation several of his friends have died.

Mal. Oh! he must not mind that, for he has had a new friend born instead of them. We have a boy—so like his father—you shall see him. He knows how to drive away my friend's melancholy. [*To Perouse.*] You love him almost as much as me—don't you?

Ade.

Ade. I can bear it no longer.

[*Some guns are fired at a distance. Perouse starts.*]

Mal. What was that?

Ade. A signal that the boat is about to return to the vessel. There they as yet know nothing. [*Lays her hand mournfully on Perouse's shoulder.*] Brother, I am going.

Per. I will accompany you.

Mal. Oh no! would you leave me alone?

Per. But for a few hours. The vessel will steer into the bay.

Mal. No, no; a storm may rise, and drive it away. No, no, you must not go. Let your sister come hither again.

Per. I have not seen her during nine years.

Mal. Have you seen enough of me, then?

Ade. Stay, and do what you promised. Let me not undergo this pain a second time. I will bring my Henry. [*Exit.*]

Mal. Who is her Henry?

Per. Her son.

Mal. Has she a son too—and is in search of its father? Poor woman!

Per. Do you pity her?

Mal. I do, indeed; but he must be a wicked man. Why did he leave her?

Per. His duties—

Mal. It is a hateful duty which makes a man leave his wife and child.

Per. The heart must be silent when our native country has demands upon us.

Mal. Will you then return to your native country?

Per. Perhaps I may.

Mal. Shall we be happier there than here?

Per.

Per. God grant it!

Mal. But I shall really be sorry to leave our hut.

Per. Will you accompany me?

Mal. I don't understand you.

Per. It is far.

Mal. What do I care for that?

Per. The voyage is dangerous.

Mal. Oh, you are joking. Shall I not be with you?

Per. You must then resign all hope of ever again seeing your father and brothers?

Mal. Have I not long renounced that hope?

Per. Yet often have I seen you stand upon the point of that rock, and stretch out your arms towards your home.

Mal. That is true; but you have often told me that you could draw a picture on paper exactly like nature. You may now have what you want from that ship, and draw me such a picture—and draw the rock too, that when I am in your country, I may still stretch out my arms towards home.

Per. If the ship should sail past yonder island, and you should espy your aged father on the beach——

Mal. [*Sobbing.*] Ah!—How you frightened me.

Per. Would you not plunge into the water, and swim to him?

Mal. [*Much affected.*] Yes—that I would.

Per. And if he ran to meet you—looked kind and affectionate——

Mal. [*Rushes into Perouse's arms.*] Here I am, my father.

Per. And if he said, "Thy brothers are dead—stay with me."

B

Mal.

Mal. I cannot, my father.

Per. I am old and sickly—

Mal. Peace, you bad man! It is not true. He is not sickly, and my brothers are alive—they are strong healthy men. But do you know, I have an excellent idea? We'll take my father with us.

Per. Will he forsake his home?

Mal. [*With innocent confidence.*] If he were to see our boy—what think you?

Per. Will the old man be able to encounter so different a climate?—And you yourself—I tremble for your life.

Mal. Be at ease. Love and happiness will make me healthy.

Per. But if many bitter sorrows there await you?

Mal. Sorrows!

Per. You must be a daily witness that—that others also love me.

Mal. So much the better. All good people must love you.

Per. But if you be obliged to share my heart.

Mal. Share it! No, that I will not. Do they, then, share hearts in Europe?

Per. There are persons who have a greater and older claim on my affections.

Mal. Greater! let them come. Older! what does that signify?

Per. Good girl, will you forgive me, if I have hitherto concealed what it seemed unnecessary to discover in this rude wilderness?

Mal. I never yet forgave you any thing, but it must be pleasant to do it. Speak.

Per. I already have a wife in my native land.

Mal. A wife! you joke. I am your wife.

Per. Earlier ties bind me to another.

Mal.

Mal. Earlier! but are they stronger?—Do you love her as much as me?

Per. She deserves it as much as you.

Mal. And does she love you as much as I do?

Per. I am sure she does.

Mal. [*Distressed.*] Ah me!—Bad man!—You are no longer my friend. Ah me!—Poor Malvina!

Per. Will you now accompany me to Europe?

Mal. I thought it so easy to forgive you, but I cannot. No, no! She does not love you as I do, or she would not have allowed you to leave her.

Per. My duties—

Mal. Go, go—you have taught me many words which I do not understand. No, no! You don't love her as much as me, or you would not have forsaken her. And I'll tell you what—your wife is dead.

Per. Why do you think—

Mal. Oh! certainly, certainly she is dead—she died long since. Consider, only—you have been absent nine years. How could she survive your loss so long? Be easy and composed. I love you more than she did, and I shall not die, because you will never leave me. [*Caresses him.*] Alexis! my friend! you will never forsake Malvina.

Per. [*Clasps her with emotion in his arms.*] No! never.

Mal! I knew you would not: Now, I do forgive you. You only wanted to alarm me. Come! let us away to the hut. Our boy has found a tortoise. I will make it ready for your sister, and then pack our little property together. I shall not forget the feather-gown [*as she hops away*]; that will please the people in your country I am sure, it is so full of different colours.

[*Exit.*

B 2

Per.

Per. Why had I not courage to complete the discovery?—She must learn it—I must inflict this wound upon her unsuspecting heart—and then—what will ensue? Affection, gratitude, and nature, bind me alike to both. Oh virtue, where is thy clue to guide me through this labyrinth?

[He sorrowfully climbs the rock, and, when he reaches the summit, falls prostrate on it.]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT

ACT II.

La Perouse is still reclining on the rock with his head propped upon his hand, and his face averted.

Enter Malvina.

Mal. The tortoise is ready, and my boy is wishing for his meal. Why am I thus left alone? Why does not my friend's sister come? Alas! she has lost her friend, and has probably no appetite. It is just the same with me, when mine stays too long away. Yes, love, love! Where is the man who created me anew, [*Walks up and down, sighing.*] who roused the sensations of my heart, and gently awoke my soul from its slumber, who taught me to feel and to think? Alexis! where art thou?

Per. [*Starts up.*] Here!

Mal. There, above! What are you doing?

Per. [*Descending.*] I was looking at the vessel.

Mal. Will they come soon?

Per. They are steering into the bay.

Mal. It is high time.

Per. [*With a sigh.*] Yes, Malvina, it is high time.

Mal. The meal is ready, and our boy is hungry.

Per. Grant me courage, Heaven!

Mal. We are waiting for your sister.

Per. [*Half aside.*] Sister! I have no sister.

Mal. What are you muttering?

Per. [*Mournfully.*] Malvina!

Mal. You seem agitated. Have you slept?

Per. Yes. I have been dreaming through eight happy years, and a sweet well-known voice to-day

awoke me. Wretch, that I am! my duties are alike sacred, yet am I doomed to trample upon one of them. Hither and thither does affection draw me by ties equally strong—'twill break my heart.

Mal. I do not understand you. How strange are your remarks!

Per. Good foul, I cannot impose upon thee.

Mal. Who ever suspected that you could?

Per. This sister—

Mal. I love her for your sake.

Per. You will hate her.

Mal. Why?

Per. You will hate me.

Mal. Friend, you are ill.

Per. She is in search of her husband.

Mal. Poor woman!

Per. She has found him.

Mal. Where?

Per. —She is my wife.

Mal. [*Rushes with a shriek into his arms.*] Hide me.

Per. Do you still love her?

Mal. Peace! Peace! Hide me, good Alexis! Protect me! [*Buries her head in his bosom.*]

Per. Will you now accompany me to Europe?

Mal. I do not understand you—I have learnt your language ill—all that you have been saying—no, it cannot be. Oh, that I understood it properly—it cannot, it cannot be so.

Per. Dear Malvina!

Mal. Yes, that I understand. Oh! it was the first word which I learnt of you. Say it again—say dear Malvina.

Per. Dear Malvina!

Mal. Dear, dear friend! Now we understand each other

other again. I am your Malvina, your wife—am I not?

Per. You are.

Mal. And that sister, with whose name you so much alarmed me; oh, recall the cruel joke!

Per. I cannot.

Mal. How! Have you deceived me? Could my friend deceive me? Oh! How that hurts me! I must take back my confidence. On whom shall I bestow it? I have no one but you. Tell me, what will you do with me? [*In the greatest distress.*] Oh, God! what will become of me?

Per. I will not forsake you.

Mal. But she will come, and will bring many people from the vessel to drag you away. [*Shrieking.*] Ha! There she is!

[Throws herself on the turf seat, and hides her face.]

Enter Adelaide and Henry.

Ade. [*To the boy.*] Embrace your father.

Hen. Is that wild man my father?

Per. My son! [*Presses him with great emotion to his heart.*] In what a place, at what a moment dost thou receive the first blessing of thy father!

Hen. I am afraid of you.

Ade. [*Pointing to Malvina.*] Does she know all?

Per. All.

Ade. [*Walks to her.*] Good girl! do not hate me.

Mal. [*Raises herself slowly, and with eyes brimful of tears gazes at Adelaide.*] What have I done to you that you should cause me this affliction?

Ade. Let us not decide upon the ways of fate.

Mal. We were so happy till you came.

Ade. Alas! I little thought that my arrival would cause any tears to flow, except those of joy.

Mal. Will you take him from me?

Ade. He is my husband.

Mal. [*Springing from the seat.*] And mine too. Say it aloud, Alexis, that she may hear it. These trees, these rocks have heard it, more than a thousand times, and *thy* God has witnessed it.

Per. He has.

Ade. He too sanctified our union. Our hearts too were united by affection. Henry, embrace thy father's knees, entreat him not to cast thy mother from him.

Hen. [*Caressing his father.*] Don't do any thing to hurt my mother, and I won't be afraid of you any more.

Mal. Is that boy your son? Oh! I have a son too. Charles! Charles! Where are you?

[*Rushes out.*]

Per. Break, poor heart!

Ade. I feel thy agony. Merciful heavens! How will this end?

Mal. [*Returning with her child.*] Here, boy! kneel and beg.

Cha. What shall I beg?

Mal. That he will not forsake your mother.

Cha. That he won't. Dear father! you won't leave her—will you?

Hen. My mother has been so long in search of you.

Cha. My mother loves you so dearly.

Hen. My mother has shed so many tears on your account.

Cha. Look! my mother is crying.

Per. [*Gazing towards Heaven with contracted quivering*]

vering muscles, and clasping his hands together with violence.] Almighty God!

Hen. My brother and sister desired us to tell you that they hoped you would soon come home to see them.

Cha. Don't leave us. Where is your home?

Mal. Far across the sea. If he goes, we shall never see him again.

Cha. Why not? He'll take us with him.

Per. That is a happy thought. Dear Malvina, come with us.

Mal. As your wife I'll go wherever you wish.

Ade. What is to become of me?

Mal. Oh, how difficult will it be to share the friend of my heart with a stranger—it would be far easier to spring into the flood—but—for the sake of my friend's peace—*[Offers her hand to Adelaide]* let us live together.

Per. To deceive thee, generous being, were base and infamous. In Europe you cannot be my wife.

Mal. Why not?

Per. Our laws——

Mal. What laws do our hearts acknowledge but those ordained by Heaven and love? I cannot be your wife in Europe! What then should I be? Your servant? Your wife's servant?

Ade. My friend.

Mal. How! would you see a friend near you, whose happiness you had destroyed? Would you behold my tears by day, and hear my groans by night? Rather remain here with us, here nature is the only lawgiver. Here we may both call him our friend. Here I will cheerfully work for you, and not repine, if you meanwhile are sleeping in his arms.

Per. Thanks, dear Malvina, for that word of consolation.

solation. Yes, here only, here on this desert coast can we expect to feel content, without infringing on the tenets of weak minds. Ambition's flame has long since been extinguished in my bosom. The sighs, which have been wafted from these rocks towards my native land, betrayed nothing but my heart's anxiety. Thou art come—love has led thee to my arms—what can I wish for more? Happy is the man who can crowd into a narrow space all that he loves. Happy is the man, who, contented with his fate, can look at the rest of the world, become as strange to him as the stars above his head. Here I need but stretch out my hand to touch a being who loves me. Let us, therefore, remain where we are, Adelaide. Let us take possession of this little retreat, which Heaven formed for us in the midst of the ocean. Affection will cultivate this barren soil, adorn that grotto, and convert those gloomy woods to laughing groves.

Mal. Yes, let us stay.

Ade. And my children, whom I left in France? And my poor old mother?

[*La Perouse sighs, and sinks into melancholy.*]

Ade. No, Alexis, do not deceive yourself. Your situation is horrible; my heart feels what you suffer, but be a man. One and one only can be yours. You must decide between us.

Per. I cannot.

Mal. My friend forsake me! How wicked should I be, could I believe it! I was a wild uncultivated being, whose sorrows and whose joys were sensual. Did you bestow reason upon me, only to drive me to madness? Did you bestow a heart upon me, only to plunge a dagger into it?

Ade. Me too you led from a convent's solitude to the altar of love. In my heart too you awoke new sensations;

sensations; my mind too was formed by your instructions. I am every thing through you, and was every thing *for* you. Will you cruelly destroy your own work?

Mal. Have we not lived many a year in peace and happiness? Have you ever seen me look discontented? The morning's dawn awoke me to provide for you, the evening led me affectionate to your arms. Think of this, and decide.

Ade. Call to mind the happy period of our union. Did I ever disturb you by ill-humour? Did not love make every duty easy to me? Did you ever, when weary of attention to weighty concerns, look in vain for that smile which then revived you. Think not of your vow; think of our affection; and decide.

Per. I cannot.

Ade. For your sake I forsook my aged mother. Oh, had you seen the tears she shed at parting—

Mal. Have you forgotten the time when we stood in the cavern while my father called, "Malvina!" He called so tenderly, so piteously,—but I shut my ears to his distress.

Per. God! I am but a man.

Ade. To find you I have braved death a thousand times. No perils among savage nations, no threatening tempests, no diseases of a strange climate, could subdue the resolution of your faithful wife.

Mal. I sprung into the boiling furge to save you: my limbs were bruised against the rocks. I wrested the dagger from my brother's hands when already raised to stab you.

Per. No, I can bear this no longer.

Ade. Bestow upon me now the reward of my fidelity.

fidelity. Perform what you vowed to me in the fight of God.

Mal. No! No! Where is thy God? To me you vowed affection. Where is thy God? You called him just. Oh, if I am to believe in his justice, let him descend and protect me!

Hen. Mother, what is the matter?

Cha. Mother, I never saw you so before.

Ade. There! kneel, and weep at the feet of this cruel man.

Mal. Boy! cares your father.

Ade. Chuse, thou, for whom I have endured every thing.

Mal. Chuse, thou, for whom I have ventured every thing.

Per. [*Transported beyond himself.*] Leave me! Despair knows no choice. All-merciful God! if thou heapest on a man a greater burden than he can sustain—it is a signal to throw off the yoke of mortality. What tiger could cast from him either of these women? What barbarian could destroy either of these helpless children? [*As if bereft of his senses.*] Make a choice! [*Wildly rolling his eyes to the right and left.*] Yes, I do make a choice. [*In a rapid tone.*] That choice is death. [*Draws a dagger, and is about to plunge it in his breast.* Adelaide, Malvina, and the children shriek. The mothers fall into his arms, while their boys cling to his knees.]

Mal. [*Wrenching the dagger from his hand, and throwing it away.*] Bad man! Would you murder us all at one blow?

Ade. [*In violent agitation.*] Recall your senses. My affection shall save you—I resign you voluntarily.

Mal. Go with her. I will take our Charles to his

his grandfather. I know that you are alive—and remember me.

Ade. Remain with her. Let me but have the consolation of saying to our children, when they run to meet me on the shore, "Your father is alive, and blesses you."

Mal. Go with her. No complaint shall follow you.

Ade. Stay with her. No tear shall oppress you.

Per. You are inventive in new torments. You shed my blood drop by drop. Oh! tear my heart no longer. Your tenderness is far more murderous than my dagger. Grant me a few moments to collect myself. Heaven protect me from insanity!

[*Rushes from the place.*

Ade. Hasten after him, Henry.

Mal. Go with him, Charles.

Ade. Carefs him.

Mal. Play round him.

[*The boys go.*

Mal. My poor friend!

Ade. I can no more—I am exhausted—he may be easy—death will soon release him from his vows.

Mal. No, let me die. Alas! I did not know before, that love and death could be friends.

Ade. All this misery is your work.

Mal. It is yours. Why did you come hither to frighten peace from our retreat? We were happy till you came, and should have remained so, had you staid away.

Ade. Why did you rob a loving wife of her husband, and helpless children of their father?

Mal. Had you loved him as I love him, you would never have allowed him to forsake your side.

Ade. Your union commenced with a crime—a breach

breach of nature's laws. You suffered your old father to return home disconsolate, and perhaps to pine away in anguish for your loss. A curse, therefore, rests on your attachment; a curse, which, alas! falls likewise on the innocent.

Mal. [*Weeping.*] What have I done, that you should speak so harshly to me?

Ade. What have you done! Had you torn one of my infants from my bosom, I should not have hated you so much. Yes, I hate you. She, who could love so ardently, can soon learn to hate. One moment of bliss, successful hope, illness, and anxiety, have strung my every nerve, and inspired me with supernatural sensations, whether good or bad is now alike. Where affection gives way, a horrible vacancy ensues; welcome, deadly hate, if thou canst fill it.

Mal. I do not hate you; but how can I love you? I was happy, and you have robbed me of all that made me so.

Ade. Restore to me what is my own. I will be generous. I will purchase the pillage of the robber. Behold these diamonds.

Mal. What! Dost thou, then, think me quite so much the savage?

Ade. Tremble at my despair. One of us *must* renounce him.

Mal. Does not that mean, one of us must die?

Ade. Die, then! Yes, thy death alone can restore my peace.

Mal. I too could wish the waves had swallowed thee—no, no, I cannot wish that.

Ade. What coldness is this which spreads through my veins? I shudder. What mounts with so much fire to my heart, and robs me of my breath? Alas! Do I then at length sink beneath my unaccustomed difficulties?

difficulties? Has my affection only protected me from the vapours of the sea, and the scorching beams of the sun below the line? Yes. My courage is fled—every limb is benumbed, and seems as if it belonged not to me. [*Pointing to her bosom.*] Here only—here is raging anguish. Oh! I am very ill.

Mal. [*Compassionately.*] Can I assist you?

Ade. Go. Thy presence but augments my sufferings. Go, and let me die without cursing thee. [*Shudders.*] Again! I am in a fever. With the last hope of my soul is my last strength departed—I can no more. [*Reels towards the turf-seat.*] Here you may prepare a grave for me—far from my children—Ah!—my mouth is parched—my tongue cleaves to the roof of it.—A burning thirst—

Enter Henry.

Hen. Look, mother, what beautiful fruit! I found it in the bushes yonder.

Ade. Are you come, my Henry, to refresh me? Quick! Give it me. [*Snatches eagerly at the fruit.*

Mal. [*Running hastily to her.*] For heaven's sake, hold! That fruit is poisonous.

Ade. Poisonous!

Mal. Whoever tastes it, will, in a few minutes, fall dead to the earth.

Ade. And do you tell me that? [*Her wildness gradually changes to inexpressible sorrow.*] And do you tell me that? [*Spreads her arms, and endeavours to rise, but sinks back without strength.*] Come to my heart.

Mal. [*Throwing herself into her arms.*] You no longer hate me?

Ade. I hate myself. My life was in your power—

it was not necessary to murder me, you had only to be silent. Oh girl, girl! you are more just than I am.

Mal. What is the matter? I do not understand you.

Ade. I am an European, and subjected to hateful passions; 'tis for this reason you do not understand me. Oh, pardon me! Have compassion on my wretched state.

Mal. Thank heaven, you are reconciled to me again. Yes, I'll love you, and take care of you, because you are good, and belong to my friend.

Ade. Retain your friend. I resign my claim. But one of us can make him happy. But one of us can be made happy by him. Does the fever invigorate my mind, or has thy generous nature irresistibly subdued me? Three victims bleed, when fate demands but one. I leave you—voluntarily—thy blessing—his tears—your happiness—what can I wish for more?

Mal. How! would you return home without him?

Ade. I go to that home where conscience will reward me. My frame is shattered—I have reached the goal of my career. Sincere affection guided me hither, and I followed its steps through the dark. Whether I appear before my judge an hour sooner or later will, I trust, be of no importance. She, who by dying promotes human happiness, cannot leave the world too soon.

Mal. Your strange discourse quite terrifies me.

Ade. One of us must renounce him—that is, must die. Said you not so?

Mal. Good woman—your wild looks—your mysterious words—what horror overpowers me! Why do my lips quiver thus? Oh! You are very ill.

Ade.

Ade. I am—leave me, kind girl—tell your friend I blessed him—I bless you also.

Hen. Dear mother.—

Ade. [*Starts up, with a shriek.*] Ah!—What was that?—Yes, I bless you too, my Henry. [*Clasps him with emotion in her arms.*] Go, and ask this generous girl whether she will be a mother to you.

Hen. I'll have no other mother than you.

Ade. Give me your promise, Malvina, that you will consider this boy as your own. He is the son of your friend.

Mal. Oh heavens!—I never before felt this inward horror. Have I then really committed a crime?—That way flew my friend in despair. Here lies a poor woman at the point of death. Is all this the consequence of my affection? Is it true that a curse rests upon our union? The curse of my old father? I tremble—a cold dew overspreads my forehead. Is it thus transgressors feel?—Forgive me, God—I knew not that I sinned. Who will console me, and tell me what to do? I'll pray. My friend has often told me that God would assist me in the time of need. I'll go, and pray. [*Exit sorrowfully.*]

Ade. Henry, seek your father.

Hen. No, mother, I'll stay with you.

Ade. Go, leave me alone. [*He obeys.*]

Ade. Henry, are you going?

Hen. You desir'd it.

Ade. [*In contention with herself.*] Yes, I do desire it. Away! [*He obeys.*]

Ade. [*With maternal anguish.*] Henry! Henry!

Hen. [*Returning.*] Do you call me?

Ade. [*Embraces him in tears.*] Love your father—remember your mother—now—away!

[*Pushes him away.*]

Hen. I'll bring my father to you.

[*Exit.*]

C

Ade.

Ade. Better is it that one victim should be sacrificed, than that misery should slowly consume us all.—'Till I came, this good girl was happy—La Perouse was happy. He remembered me with regret, as if death had separated us. My arrival was to him the appearance of a spirit. It wore, 'tis true, the form of one formerly beloved, but still it was a spirit.—This girl is young and handsome, whereas my few attractions are faded, and tears will not renew my beauty. Gratitude would bind him to me, but love hates every tie except its own. I would not reproach him, but he would fear me, and avoid me. Let me be resolute. Far as my eye can reach, no gleam of consolation appears in the horizon. 'Tis well. [*Raises herself, and takes the fruit from the ground, which she had before thrown there.*] How soon is this swallowed! It will allay my feverish thirst—let me not think what it will do more. [*Surveying the fruit.*] How beautiful and enticing! Poor mortals! In what lovely forms does death lie in wait for you! Thanks to chance for this last favour. No dagger makes me tremble—no nauseous poison creates my disgust—who could be afraid of this apple? [*Raises it to her lips.*]

Enter La Perouse hastily.

Per. [*In anxious alarm.*] Our Henry tells me you are ill—[*Espies the fruit.*] Heavens! Throw that fruit away. 'Tis poisonous.

Ade. I know it.

Per. Know it! and yet—

Ade. I will restore your peace of mind.

Per. [*Seizes her hand.*] Adelaide, thou art ill. None but a disordered imagination could conceive
so

so horrible a purpose.—[*Takes the fruit from her, and throws it away.*]

Ade. I cannot contend against you. It is easy to take away the fruit, but can you root out the seed of death, which is sown in my breast?

Per. If you no longer love me, think at least of your children, and your poor old mother.

Ade. I wanted to give you the last proof of my affection. Did I not devote myself to death when I resolved to encounter the perils of unknown seas? I was ready to die for the distant hope of seeing you again. I have found you, and clasped you in my arms. I asked much of God, and he has granted much. Shall I then shrink from death, if it will procure your peace?

Per. Dear Adelaide, your romantic imagination makes every object round you appear in a false light. 'Tis because you feel resolution enough to rob yourself of existence that you deem the sacrifice so necessary. He, who is capable of achieving an heroic deed, will himself create dangers. Why should you throw yourself into the abyss, as long as a twig is growing at which you can catch?

Ade. Where grows this twig?

Per. Patience, hope, and resolution, are oaks on which every one may rely. Scarcely are a few hours elapsed since your arrival. We are hurried away by the first storm of passions. How can a drunkard cross a rapid stream upon a narrow board? Let us wait till the soul has found its equipoise, and even then, if patience, hope, and resolution, forsake us, we have one staff on which we still may lean—reliance—reliance upon God.

Ade. [*Gently raising her eyes towards heaven.*] Reliance upon God——

Per. I ask no miracle. I require not that God

should send an angel to us; but only a man—one cool collected man, who might *think* for us.

Enter Charles and Henry.

Cha. Father, another stranger—

Hen. Mother, my uncle is come.

Ade. My brother!

Per. God, thou hast sent thy angel. Where—where is he?

Enter Clairville and Malvina.

Per. [*Rushing into his arms.*] My brother!

Cla. Welcome from the regions of the dead! Have we at length found the long-lost wanderer? [*Shaking his hand.*] Well, sister, you are a favourite of heaven, for it has worked half a miracle for you.

Ade. Oh!

Cla. Still fighting! Your appearance indicates but little joy at this event. [*To Perouse, who is attempting to speak.*] Hold! I know all. I bring you a girl, who, through affection for you, wishes to do a very silly thing. I observed her praying—I listened—and heard her pray for resolution to die.

Per. [*Alarmed.*] Malvina!

Mal. Forgive me, my friend. I was praying, when suddenly an idea darted across my mind—Die, Malvina, and all will be well. I thought it was the voice of God.

Cla. Women! women! You are ever fancying that the voice of your passions is the voice of God, and are ready to fell the whole tree, if a single caterpillar creep upon a leaf; in short, this brown-haired girl

girl has shewn me how the land lies, and, with your permission, I am glad to find it as it is, for it suits my plan.

Ade. You are glad!

Per. What plan?

Cla. Forgive the vain expression. Could the swallow speak, it would tell you that it builds its nest by a deep-concerted plan. Necessity teaches the beaver to build a hut, and man to reflect. Bitter necessity is the mother of my plan. But, before I proceed, answer me, brother,—have these women equal claims upon you?

Per. They have.

Cla. You love them both?

Per. I do.

Cla. Will you discard my sister?

Per. No.

Cla. Will you forsake Malvina?

Per. No.

Cla. 'Tis well—let me tell you, sister, what has happened to me since our vessels parted two days since. An Englishman, who was taking petty thieves to Botany Bay, and had left the greater in Europe, has related to me strange events. We no longer have a native land. Anarchy has devoured it. The rich are become beggars, and we—why, we *were* rich.

Per. And are consequently also beggars.

Cla. With health, strength, industry, and a few acres warmed by the sun, and moistened by the rain, we shall, methinks, be rich enough.

Per. Do I understand you properly? Where are my children?

Ade. And our mother?

Cla. Your children are alive, and our mother—
[*Hesitates.*] is well.

Ade. You hesitate! Your countenance is gloomy.—You distress me. Where, where is our mother?

Clay. ——— She is here.

Ade. and *Per.* Here.

Cla. [*Raising his eyes with emotion.*] Yes, she certainly is here. Maternal love is not buried with the body.

Ade. [*Bursting into tears.*] Alas! she is dead.

Cla. She is gone, like us, to another world, and has left us nothing but her compass, virtue. Sister, let us take possession of the sweet inheritance; reliance upon Heaven forsakes not the upright even in prison.—Look round! Is this island a prison? Here fruit and blossoms beckon to you on every side. Here the bread-tree grows to satisfy your hunger, and fountains spring to quench your thirst.

Ade. [*Sorrowfully.*] My good mother!

Cla. I have made a few remarks as I passed. The soil is good; its produce prospers, and there is wood in abundance. With a little diligence nature will cheerfully lavish her treasures on us.

Per. I but half comprehend you.

Cla. How!—Do you still feel anxious to revisit our degenerated country? Would you there swim with the tide of blood, or vainly strive to stem it?—After having been so long driven from one part of the world to another, have you not yet learnt the value of peace and tranquillity? I have—and were you to promise me hoards of wealth, I would rather fly to the naked summit of mount Caucasus, than take a share in a revolution, which, were it even just, will sow the seeds of death and discord, that posterity may reap a crop of freedom manured by the corpses of their ancestors. Yes, I am an egotist. I wish to enjoy life, and without peace there

there can be no enjoyment. I have already hoisted the white flag, and to-morrow am I resolved to sail for England, whither my wife fled with your and my children. There I will take on board all who are dear to us, and load my vessel with every thing necessary for us in this retired abode.—Doubtless I shall find artificers enough, who are willing to sail to the land of peace, for innumerable emigrants are wandering without a home. I will leave you, at present, all I can spare, with which you must be content till I return! If wind and weather be favourable I shall not be long absent. We will then found a colony, like the Greeks, when they fled from Egypt, and who knows whether, after the expiration of a few thousand years, we may not be as famous as Inachus or Cecrops?

Mal. [*Caressing him.*] Good man! I don't understand all you say, but I understand that we are to live here together.

Per. Clairville, you possess the happy gift of combining a cool understanding with a warm imagination. I agree to your proposal with delight, and if Adelaide—

Ade. Alas, brother!

Cla. Well, sister! Will you make yourself a widow, and beg with your children in Europe from door to door? Shall Perouse return with you to be butchered in the land which gave him birth?—Here dwells security—here reigns superfluity—here love and peace invite your stay.

Ade. Peace! where shall I find it?

Per. Alas! she wishes to die.

Cla. A mere consequence of illness. Our rude fare at sea has affected her blood; for I cannot, will not conceive that an ignoble jealousy of her husband's benefactress—

Mal.

Mal. [Turning to Adelaide with reserve and affection.] I have prayed for you and myself—let us be sisters.

Ade. Sisters! [Seems for a moment buried in reflection.] Sisters!—Good girl! you awake in me a consoling thought. Yes. Sisters let us be, if this man will be our brother. As we cannot share him, neither of us must possess him. We, as sisters, will dwell in one hut—he, as our brother, in another. He will assist us in educating our children. During the day we will form one happy family, and the evening shall part us. The mothers shall remain with their children—the father in his hut.—Do you consent to this, Malvina—and you, Perouse?

Mal. Willingly, if I may but see him.

Per. With all my heart, if you be thereby satisfied.

Cla. Brother, I wish you joy. The treaty is concluded. Take each other's hands, and ratify it by a warm embrace.

Ade. [Goes towards La Perouse with outstretched arms.] A sister's embrace.

Cla. As you please. I don't dispute about expressions.

Mal. My friend! my brother!

Per. [Holding them both in his arms.] My sisters!

Cla. [Creeping to Malvina.] My mother is happy.

Hen. [Hanging on Adelaide.] My mother smiles again.

Cla. The paradise of innocence!

[The curtain falls.]

THE END.

